

Hampering Holiday Weight Gain

It's tradition: most Americans gain some weight during the holiday season-typically between one and five pounds. How can you not? It may seem impossible with all the dinners, parties and treats. Luckily, there are some strategies to help keep some of the extra pounds at bay.

- Substitute low fat and low calorie ingredients, or reduce the amount used of high fat/calorie substances. For example: use yogurt instead of sour cream; use raisins instead of chocolate chips; use 1/3 less oil/shortening and 1/3 less sugar in recipes; use non-stick cooking spray on pans; use skim milk instead of whole milk; etc.
- Eat moderate portions of food - don't stuff yourself.
- Make good food choices. Fill up on low-calorie and low-fat items. For example, instead of fruitcake, eat dried fruit. Instead of ham, choose turkey. Instead of stuffing, eat cornbread or dinner rolls.
- If you can't resist those rich, delicious, fattening foods that you love but know you shouldn't eat, try exercising your self-control by taking only a few bites.
- Before you head out to a party, fill up with a healthy snack. This will make you feel full and less likely to munch on high calorie, high fat holiday treats.
- Watch your consumption of alcohol. The empty calories of alcoholic beverages can be quite fattening. In addition, the effects of alcohol consumption might cause you to loosen your resolve to limit your food intake. Try sparkling water or juice instead.
- When you're not out on the party circuit, try and stick with your exercise routine. If you don't already have one, try to start a new routine or fit some extra physical activity into your day. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Park a little further away at the shopping mall. Walk to the corner store instead of driving.

Here are some examples of healthy lower-fat/calorie holiday food choices:

- Pumpkin is loaded with Vitamin A and when it's pureed can be a substitute to replace fat in baked goods (used in a similar fashion to applesauce).
- Sweet potatoes have Vitamin A, Vitamin C, lots of fiber, and potassium.
- White potatoes contain Vitamin C, B vitamins, potassium, and some minerals such as iron and copper.
- Figs (as in fig pudding) have potassium, calcium, magnesium, and niacin.
- Roast turkey (skinless) has about 20 grams of protein per 3 ounces, Vitamin B6, and niacin, with almost no fat.

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